

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

January 1998

Roller Coaster rescues challenge team

It's summer, you're at your favorite theme park and you've been waiting all day to ride the new roller coaster. As you climb in the car, your heart begins to pound in anticipation of the thrills and chills you'll shortly experience.

The car lurches forward, you shoot down the first hill, screech around the curves, do the loops and then — the car stops. On a curve. At an extreme angle. In front of a loop. You come to the horrible realization you're stuck in a roller coaster that's inside a big, dark building.

How would you react in such a situation? If you were in Hanover County visiting Paramount's King's Dominion, you need not worry. You'd be in the well-trained hands of the county's Special Operations Rescue Team, which has practiced repeatedly with the amusement park's emergency services staff to handle just such a situation. Three times in the last two years, when the King's Dominion "Outer Limits" roller coaster ride got stuck, the team tested their training and specialized rescue skills.

When the park acquired the ride, staff preplanned with the county from the start. "King's Dominion did some pretty exhaustive testing," said the county's EMS Coordinator, Fred Crosby. "They had anticipated problems with the roller coaster stopping at certain points."

The roller coaster uses a new technology that propels the car with electromagnets rather than chains. Mounted on the ride's rails, the electromagnets create a magnetic charge that shoots the car down the first incline and up the first hill. From that point, gravity takes over.

"The ride has several loops and, for

various reasons, the car gets stuck on the same loop," said Hanover County Emergency Services Coordinator, Mike Harman. "The car needs to get up to 55 mph to get through the loops. If it's not up to speed, radar guns mounted on the ride will stop it."



This type of rescue presented specific challenges for the rescue team. Members include between 40 to 50 people from the county rescue squads and fire companies, most of whom are volunteers. The team practices scenarios such as cave, ground and close-confinement rescues, using specialized equipment for each situation.

"King's Dominion met with us and brought in the rescue team to show them the ride, explain it and practice the rescues," said Crosby. "They ran the ride over and over again. The cars actually did stop at certain points during the practices and the team preplanned for those points. The twist was that, during the actual incidents, the car didn't stop where we expected it to stop. Because of our preplanning and practice, we knew exactly how we were going to approach the situation. The team was so well practiced,

members viewed the rescues as another training exercise."

Once the King's Dominion staff stabilizes the ride, the team frees the ride's passengers and a derrick crane is used to move them to the ground. "Because it's an inside ride, our access to it is somewhat

restricted," said Crosby. "The crane can't reach all points on the ride, so the rescue team has trained to use rope rescues in that situation."

Freeing the 20 to 30 people the car carries takes about an hour and a half and can involve between 50 to 100 county and park staff. "You really can't use the standard fire truck aerial equipment in the building," said Harman. "The team takes the time to size up the situation and plan out the precautions it needs to take to make the operation as safe as possible. Our training in the areas of safety and rescue truly paid off."

The most delicate part of the rescues involved dealing with the families of those who were trapped. "King's Dominion created an area for the families where they could watch the rescue," explained Harman.

Crosby said, "The park provided drinks and food and we had one of the park staff explain each step of the operation as we
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"Project Impact" promotes mitigation

FEMA wants emergency managers to "think out of the box." The agency is launching a new approach to emergency management that emphasizes moving from a "response and recovery" approach to disasters to one that emphasizes preparedness and "disaster management."

In line with this, the agency's national "Project Impact" campaign seeks to drive home the importance of pre-disaster mitigation. Seven pilot communities around the country have been selected to demonstrate the economic benefits of pre-disaster mitigation strategies to state and local governments, businesses and

private individuals.

The campaign also offers the *Project Impact Guidebook* based on the concept that, for mitigation strategies to be successful, the entire community needs to be involved in the effort. "This is a profoundly different way of thinking about mitigation," said Holly Harrington, communication officer for FEMA's Emergency Information and Media Affairs. "This approach stresses the involvement of local government officials, business professionals and other profes-

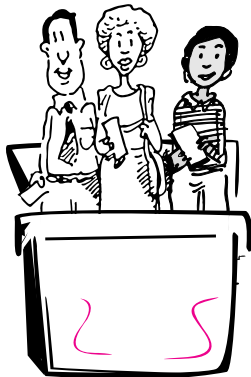
sionals who have an interest in their community's future."

Designed to serve as a "roadmap" through the process of establishing a

"disaster-resistant" community, the guidebook addresses ways in which to establish public/private-sector partnerships, who to involve from your local government, provides numerous checklists on processes such as mitigation measures, media relations and other areas, discusses how to effectively use money and existing resources, deals with community growth issues and code enforcement and describes how to set up public information campaigns.

"Basically, it helps you identify your hazards and vulnerability and then helps you figure out how to prioritize this information," said Harrington.

To order this FEMA resource, call 800/480-2520 and ask for item #9-5552. For more information on "Project Impact," call John Benn at 215/931-5526.



Roller Coaster

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went along."

"We attended to the creature comforts of the riders and families as soon as we could. On one of the rescues, we played music to calm the riders who were trapped. As each person came down from the ride, a King's Dominion employee greeted them and made sure the rest of their day went well," he explained.

The smoothness with which the rescues were executed is a tribute to the county's working relationship with their private industry partner. The park is a presence — during peak tourist season, park visitors double the county's population. "We work hand-in-hand with King's Dominion," said Harman. "In the last couple of years, we've had at least two full-scale exercises with the park."

Critical to success was the use of the Incident Command System (ICS). "It took

some effort to get the park to buy into ICS," said Harman. "We used parts of it in all three rescues and used it during the first full-scale exercise. The second exercise we held really helped convince park management that it works. The ICS is a good way to control the incident, and they now have confidence in the system and know it works," said Harman.

Crosby observed, "These were high confidence, low-stress operations. The major lesson we learned from these experiences was the value of preplanning and practicing. The two sides knew each other, had worked together and understood each other's command structures. This has worked so well, we've expanded this approach to the other rides in the park."

Harman said, "There were no complainers, no huge egos — it was a cooperative venture and that's the way it should be when protecting the safety of the public."

Emergency manager receives scholarship

David Nichols, emergency services coordinator for Bedford County, is one of three winners in the Yvorra Leadership Development Foundation's 1997 National Scholarship competition. He was selected out of a pool of candidates from all over the country. Nichols is currently working on his B.S. in Fire Science Administration at the University of Maryland.

The Yvorra Foundation was organized in 1988 in honor of Deputy Fire Chief James G. Yvorra, who was killed in the line of duty in Prince George's County, Maryland. The foundation seeks to develop leaders among emergency medical and fire services people primarily through its scholarship program. For more information about the program, call Mike Hildebrand at 410/586-3048.

Leadership for the front lines

Some tips for building the team:

- ◆ Trust your subordinates. You can't expect them to go all out for you if they think you don't believe in them.
- ◆ Develop a vision. People want to follow someone who knows where he or she is going.
- ◆ Keep your cool. The best leaders show their mettle under fire.
- ◆ Encourage risk. Nothing demoralizes the troops like knowing that the slightest failure could jeopardize their entire career.
- ◆ Invite dissent. Your people aren't giving their best if they are afraid to speak up.

(from an article in *Fortune* magazine by Kenneth Labich)

HAZ MAT

Partnerships yield results for Loudoun

When SARA Title III was legislated, government and industry got to know each other across a minefield of laws and regulatory issues. From the beginning, Loudoun County has worked to develop programs that have cleared a path through this minefield and has enabled them to establish successful partnerships with local industry.

County Fire Marshal Joe Sullivan described the early efforts to implement the legislation's regulatory guidelines. He explained, "As required by SARA Title III, we contacted the various businesses in the area which dealt with Extremely Hazardous Substances (EHS). One of the requirements under the legislation is that the facility conducts hazmat training for their employees. We could have issued them a citation, but instead, we took the approach of 'we're here to help you and we can develop that training for you.'"

Over the years, the county's fire/rescue department has developed an extensive hazardous materials training program for business and industry. Rather than pay outside vendors to provide the required training, the facilities can turn to the county's training division to help meet the training requirement.

Fire Training Officer John Wisner has been refining the program the past three years. "I try to tailor the training to the industry," he explained. "If

it's a regulatory situation, I look at what information they need to know, what they're required to know and provide that training." Wisner has also worked with the Leesburg airport and water treatment facility, the school system and other public water treatment facilities.

The county has benefited in numerous ways from these partnerships, Wisner explained. He has recently been working to develop an area at the 20-acre training facility used by the county's fire, hazmat and EMS. The area will provide flammable gas training and include props that both industry and government first responders might encounter on any given day.

"We have about 10 to 12 gas businesses in the area that sell both propane and natural gas," said Wisner. "All of them collectively are providing about \$200,000 to help fund the training facility project. In return, they will be able to train at the site and can use the county's instructors if they desire."

Working with businesses through the local LEPC, Wisner is developing a public awareness campaign based on the Community Right-To-Know Act. The campaign educates the public about its local LEPC. Tours of local businesses are arranged, during which representatives explain what chemicals are used and the steps that are taken to
(continued at top of page)

protect public safety in the event of a chemical release.

"It's good public relations, if nothing else," said Wisner. "The people in industry and in our communities are our customers and we want to keep them safe."

A local business is participating with the county in the first of a series of exercises testing the different sections of the LEPC's Chemical Emergency Response Plan.

This past November, the response portion of the plan was tested in a full-scale exercise conducted on the

company site.

In addition to this large-scale exercise, Sullivan said, "We train about five or six times a year (with industry). Our size helps — we're a rural county, but we have a large enough staff to provide this type of training assistance. Keeping it local has advantages. We have some ownership and we do care about the facility because it's in our community. They need to have the training and we are a resource they can use."

For more information, call John Wisner at 703/777-0333.

VEMA Conference: Workshops spotlight mitigation

The spotlight is on mitigation at the Virginia Emergency Management Association's 1998 Winter Conference. From February 11-13 at Virginia Beach, the conference offers a "prime rib and champagne" range of workshops.

Rita Calvan, FEMA Region III director, will set the tone as the keynote speaker. Her presentation is followed by case studies that address mitigation as it applies to post-incident remediation as well as predisaster preparedness.

Mark Howard from DEQ will discuss the Colonial Pipeline Incident, one of the largest oil releases in Virginia history. In a response that involved over 40 agencies, the spill threatened the water supply in Maryland and Washington, D.C., as well as the Northern Virginia area. "It really was a worse-case scenario in the true sense of the word," said Howard. He will be focusing on the response, the remediation strategies used to contain the spill, cleanup, the litigation and the long-term effects of the incident.

Dan Summers, from New Hanover County in North Carolina, is a seasoned pro at responding to disasters. He'll be describing how his county handled double-whammy visits from Hurricanes Bertha and Fran in the 1996 hurricane season.

David Beasley from the city of Richmond will discuss last winter's electrical fire that caused extensive damage to the Richmond Coliseum. The building was out of commission for weeks while the damage was repaired. Because this venue hosts frequent sports events, musical shows and other activities, the city felt the financial impact from this fire.

Workshops on special events planning, hazard mitigation and emergency preparedness planning for business promise to expand your horizons.

"The conference planning group came to a consensus that mitigation was an area we weren't spending enough time on," said conference planner Chris Eudailey. "We feel the workshops provide a good opportunity to learn from the experiences of others."

For information, call Chris Eudailey at 540/582-7095.

Training Calendar

Decision Making and Problem Solving

Originally scheduled for December 11, has been rescheduled for January 7, 1998.
Rockingham County

Elected Official's Briefing

The Elected Official's Briefings, originally scheduled for December 18 and February 9, have been postponed until a later date in 1998.

Effective Communications

January 13-15, 1998
Stafford County

Introduction to Emergency Management

January 14-16
VDES in Richmond

Basic Public Information Course

January 21-23
VDES in Richmond

Status Assessment Facilitators Workshop

January 27-28
March 24-25
VDES in Richmond

Effective Communication

February 4-6
VDES in Richmond

Developing Volunteer Resources

February 18-19
Culpeper

EOC Management and Operations

February 23-25
Danville

Hazardous Weather and Flood Preparedness

March 3-5
VDES in Richmond

Emergency Action Plans for Dams

March 11
Leesburg
For information, call Curt Nellis,
Region II Coordinator,
at 540/829-7371.

Disaster Response and Recovery Operations

March 17-19
Roanoke

Mass Fatality Incident Management

March 17-19
VDES in Richmond

Instructional Presentation Skills

March 24-26
Fairfax
For information, call the VDES
Training Office at 804/897-6559.

Technological Hazards Division

Hazardous Materials Technician

March 9-20
The location for this class has been changed from Ashland to Martinsville.

Chemistry of Hazardous Materials

April 6-17
Roanoke
For information, call the VDES Tech
Haz Division at 804/897-6573.

Cameo Workshop

February 3-5
Richmond
For information, call George Roarty
at 804/897-6574.

Search and Rescue

SAR Council
January 24
Richmond

GSAR Institute

January 16-18 (Part I)
February 20-22 (Part II)
Roanoke

Managing Search Operations

March 20-22 (Part I)
April 17-19 (Part II)
Charlottesville
For information, call Winnie
Pennington at 804/674-2422.

Conferences

SFCAV Midwinter Conference

February 27-March 1, 1998
Virginia Beach
For information, call Janet Areson
at 804/649-8471.

In conjunction with this conference, the following course is offered:

"Public Safety Response to Terrorism — Management Considerations"

February 26-27
For information, call Ron Hargrave
at 804/897-6573.

VEMA 1998 Winter Conference

February 11-13, 1998
Virginia Beach
For information, call Chris Eudailey
at 540/582-7095.

National Hurricane Conference

April 6-10
Norfolk
For information, call Jim Talbot
at 757/441-5600.

1998 Annual Conference on Technology in Emergency Management

April 21-24, 1998
Virginia Beach
For information, call Mark Pennington
at 804/897-6532.

Virginia Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Conference

May 29-31
Virginia Beach
For information, call Gary Brown
at 804/371-3500.

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In conjunction with FEMA Region III, VDES is offering the following course:

Disaster Survey Team

February 3-5
Salem
For information, call George Roarty
at 804/897-6574.



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